

Message Text

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PAGE 01 ROME 07712 051513Z

70

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FM AMEMBASSY ROME

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5179

INFO AMCONSUL BELFAST

AMEMBASSY DUBLIN

AMEMBASSY LONDON

C O N F I D E N T I A L ROME 7712

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, VT, UK, EI

SUBJECT: POPE PAUL ADDRESSES PROBLEM OF NORTHERN IRELAND

1. POPE PAUL SENT ON JUNE 2 A LETTER CONTAINING AN URGENT PLEA FOR PEACE IN IRELAND TO CARDINAL CONWAY, PRIMATE OF ALL IRELAND. THE POPE SAID HE CONTINUES "TO FOLLOW WITH GROWING ANXIETY AND CONCERN THE PROTRACTION OF INTOLERABLE SITUATION WHICH, FAR FROM IMPROVING THROUGH GENERAL EFFORT TO BRING ABOUT CONCILIATION, HAS IN FACT BEEN AGGRAVATED BY TRAFIC INCREASE IN BLIND AND UNSPEAKABLE ACTS OF VIOLENCE. . . PUBLIC ORDER AND SAFETY HAVE THUS BEEN UNDERMINED AND IT WOULD SEEM IN THE PRESENT SAD CIRCUMSTANCES AS THOUGH HUMAN LIFE HAS COME TO BE REGARDED AS OF LITTLE VALUE." SCRUPULOUSLY AVOIDING POLITICS, POPE MADE APPEAL THAT "ALL VIOLENCE SHOULD CEASE FROM WHATEVER SIDE IT MAY COME."

2. BRITISH MINISTER TO HOLY SEE CRAWLEY INFORMED US THAT ABOVE LETTER WAS SURPRISE TO HIM BUT TOTALLY ACCEPTABLE TO HMG. CRAWLEY AND HIS STAFF SPEND A GOOD DEAL OF TIME DISCUSSING NORTHERN IRELAND WITH VATICAN COUNTERPARTS, BUT MOST OF THESE DISCUSSIONS ARE LIMITED TO INFORMING VATICAN OF UK VIEWS AND ANALYSES. BRITISH GOVERNMENT, ACCORDING TO CRAWLEY, GENERALLY
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PAGE 02 ROME 07712 051513Z

PLEASED WITH VATICAN EMANATIONS ON NORTHERN IRELAND, WITH

EXCEPTION OF POPE'S NEGATIVE REFERENCE TO INTERNMENT POLICY IN AUGUST 1971. MOREOVER, HMG IS FULLY AWARE THAT VATICAN, AS WELL AS IRISH HIERARCHY, HAVE NO INFLUENCE WITH IRA OR OTHER CATHOLIC TERRORIST GROUPS. CRAWLEY DID NOTE, HOWEVER, THAT HE WAS DISPLEASED WITH CARDINAL CONWAY'S RECENT STATEMENT URGING TRANSFER OF PRICE SISTERS TO A PRISON IN ULSTER.

3. DISCUSSING DETERIORATED NORTHERN IRELAND SITUATION IN GENERAL, CRAWLEY SAID HE PERSONALLY FEARS HMG IS BACK TO SQUARE ONE FOLLOWING LATEST PROTESTANT-INSPIRED STRIKE WHICH CLEARLY DEMONSTRATED ABILITY OF PROTESTANT EXTREMISTS TO TIE UP COMPLETELY ULSTER'S ECONOMY. HE FEARS THAT REALIZATION AMONG BRITISH POPULATION AT LARGE THAT THEIR GOVERNMENT UNABLE TO COPE WITH NORTHERN IRELAND PROBLEM MAY CREATE GROUNDWELL OF POPULAR DEMAND FOR TOTAL MILITARY WITHDRAWAL FROM ULSTER. HE NOTED THAT IN PAST HE HAD WARNED VATICAN THAT IF BRITISH POPULATION BECAME TOO EXASPERATED THERE MAY BE WITHDRAWAL DEMAND WHICH NO BRITISH GOVERNMENT COULD LONG RESIST. AT THAT TIME VATICAN INTERLOCUTORS MADE NO COMMENT, BUT HE IS CONVINCED THAT, SHOULD DEMAND FOR WITHDRAWAL REACH SERIOUS PROPORTIONS, VATICAN WOULD BE SURE TO MAKE STRONG PLEA URGING CONTINUED BRITISH PRESENCE IN ULSTER. BEAUDRY

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